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INAUGURAL INNOVATIONS IN AGING 2012 EXPO IS A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

Event Drew More than 5,000 to National Harbor for Professional Conference, Job Fair and Kidney Walk

National Harbor, MD (May 14, 2012) – The groundbreaking Innovations in Aging 2012 was a smash hit among those who attended the first-ever conference aimed at older adults and their caregivers, according to the Maryland Department of Aging (MDoA), one of three convening agencies. The event was held May 3-5, 2012 at the Gaylord Resort and Conference Center in National Harbor, Maryland. In addition to a conference for professionals in the aging field, the general public was drawn to the job fair, free consumer expo, and a 5K walk to benefit the National Kidney Foundation. Innovations in Aging 2012 was a collaboration of the Virginia Department for the Aging, District of Columbia Office on Aging, and MDoA.

“This was the first attempt at a comprehensive, regional aging conference and we are thrilled with how Innovations in Aging 2012 was received by the residents of the tri-state area,” said Department of Aging Secretary Gloria Lawlah. “Turnout was great and those who came felt they benefited from the resources and information shared during the event.”

More than 5,000 people descended upon the beautiful National Harbor campus to grapple with issues facing a rapidly-graying Baby Boom generation, for whom the need for goods and services is rising exponentially. Of that total, a full thousand people came with resumes in hand for a job fair that featured healthcare organizations, financial firms, and state agencies. The two-day professional conference attracted more than 350 registrants, exceeding MDoA estimates.

“What attracted conference attendees the most was the high quality of the course offerings,” noted James A. Rothrock, Commissioner of the Virginia Department for the Aging. “The presenters were top-notch and the subject matter timely.”

Media partner WUSA*9 popular station anchor JC Hayward served as host and emcee for key moments of the conference and expo. The Friday afternoon luncheon filled a Gaylord ballroom with over 400 guests who heard from Kathy Greenlee, the Administrator for Community Living at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; J. Joseph Curran, a former Maryland attorney general, who received a Lifetime Achievement Award as part of the Maryland Governor’s Leadership in Aging Awards; and Sylvia Mackey, sports head trauma activist and widow of NFL Hall of Famer John Mackey. Rothrock, of Virginia, also presented the winners of this year’s Commonwealth Council on Aging “Best Practices” awards.

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Conference organizers were stunned by the crush of people who appeared on Saturday morning for the consumer expo. Attendees flocked to cooking and fitness demonstrations, line dancing and Zumba exhibitions, the health screening bus, and even sat behind the wheels of the smart cars displayed on the conference floor.

"It was an awesome experience to work with our counterparts in Virginia and Maryland in assembling a conference to educate stakeholders about current policy issues and best practices that matter most to our seniors and family caregivers. I was especially excited about the job fair for our seniors," said John M. Thompson, Ph.D., executive director, DC Office on Aging. "We look forward to attracting a greater number of employers at the next Innovations in Aging Expo so that more seniors will gain employment."

The Ronald D. Paul Companies organized the 5K and one-mile memorial Kidney Foundation walks, which were chaired for the second consecutive year by Washington Redskin Anthony Armstrong. More than 300 people participated in this year's walk.

There will be a special televised recap of Innovations in Aging 2012 in June on WUSA*9 in the Washington, DC viewing area.

Sponsors for Innovations in Aging 2012 included AARP, WUSA*9, Maryland Clean Energy, Medco, Leading Age, Pepco, VITAS and the Beacon Newspapers.

"I especially want to thank our sponsors and exhibitors," added MDoA Secretary Lawlah. "Without them, this would not have been possible."

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